of the bride. Among the Shilluk no such obligation exists except in the form of a recognised debt, nowadays enforceable in the Courts, which is dependent on the number of cattle which remain outstanding in the bridewealth of the bride's mother.

Thus, in the diagram, from the bridewealth paid by *E* for *A*, no portion will be set aside for *C*, unless the full bridewealth of ten head of cattle was not paid by *D* on his marriage to *B*. Since few Shilluk can afford to hand over ten head of cattle at once, and because there have been periods when there were few cattle to pay, this is the source of much litigation in the courts. At the same time, such debts are not carried forward a further generation. Thus *C* could not claim cattle outstanding from *B*'s marriage on the marriage of *F*, though *H* might do so from the marriage of *A* to *E*.

The pattern of distribution among paternal kinsmen of the bride is relatively simple, which is perhaps natural when bridewealth stands at so low a figure. If alive, the bride's father's father should receive one cow (which would go to his sons by another wife); the bride's father's brothers (her paternal uncles) and even his half-brothers are also entitled to a share. Speaking in conventional terms only, Shilluk say that where a full brother (uterine) gets two cows, a half-brother only gets one. In fact none of them are likely to get anything more than a sheep or a goat, for if a man has many brothers and half-brothers there would be little or no cattle left for the bride's father or his sons. Distribution is usually dictated by circumstances prior to the marriage and the pattern of previous bridewealth distributions which create reciprocal rights. From an analysis of some fifty Shilluk marriages, my impression is that this form of distribution is quoted as a convention only and is rarely if ever followed now. As among other Nilotes, uterine and half-brothers within one domestic group are expected to marry in strict order of age. A man will generally expect to marry with the cattle brought in by the marriage of his younger uterine sister, if he has one, and, after any deductions which may be necessary to complete the bridewealth payments of the bride's mother and the fulfilment of other debts which may be pressing, he will probably get all the remaining cattle. Though large numbers of sheep and goats[1] are brought in by the marriage, these are not distributed among the bride's paternal kinsmen according to definite claims, nor are they regarded as paid to meet claims which could be interpreted as a survival from times when the

[1] The average seems to be somewhere between fifteen and thirty.

8:Howell E-4.5 (1937, 1948) 1953 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

Shilluk were perhaps more prosperous cattle-owners and the rates of bridewealth were higher.

There is in fact no evidence that the number of cattle paid as bridewealth was ever higher than ten, though it may have been so in the era preceding Turkish times. During the *Mahdia*, and for some time after, when the Shilluk had even less cattle than they have now, the transfer of more than two head as bridewealth seems to have been exceptional. But in the more prosperous period which followed, when cattle increased, there was an aftermath of claims dating back to marriages contracted at an earlier date. Some of these claims were upheld in the Courts established by the Government; a procedure which no doubt fostered the belief that the rate of ten head of cattle was unalterable and amounted to the enforcement of obligations which would not otherwise have been honoured. Latterly, the Administration has made attempts to reduce the bridewealth rate. At times in recent years, presumably after epidemics which have sometimes nearly halved the cattle population in the course of twelve months, ten head of cattle as bridewealth has been excessive, with varying results all naturally considered undesirable by the Administration. First, there has been a marked increase in litigation over bridewealth claims. Young men, having started the processes of marriage and made some initial payments of cattle, have then absconded with their brides and refused to honour further obligations. Second, since suitable husbands with sufficient cattle are not to be found, Shilluk girls, unable to marry the men of their choice, in an age when some degree of emancipation has been the result of alien government, tend to drift into the towns as concubines and prostitutes.[1] This process has an equally undesirable corollary. The young men, unable to marry, are more inclined to illicit love affairs, with the result that adultery has increased with a consequent rise in litigation. Finally, the Shilluk have taken to marrying their daughters to Nuer or Dinka who are easily able to find the ten head of cattle required. This process, though not necessarily undesirable in itself, has the effect of aggravating the position, because Shilluk men find it even harder to acquire wives. Without this absorption of Shilluk girls by intermarriage with other tribes or by the process of detribalization, their guardians might be prepared to accept smaller numbers of cattle as they undoubtedly did during the impoverished times of the *Mahdia*.

There have been many discussions, recorded in Government files, of the necessity for reducing the amount of bridewealth and it is clear that Shilluk chiefs and notables have themselves been acutely aware of the need to do so. Yet, despite resolutions made at Shilluk Council meetings, no alteration has in fact occurred.

Divorce and the Dissolution of Marriage

Divorce laws among the Shilluk are, in principle though not in detail, similar to those current among other Nilotic tribes. We must here distinguish between what may be called 'active divorce', when both parties are still living, and 'dissolution of legal union', which sometimes follows the death of the wife.

[1] Encouraged perhaps by the removal of customary deterrents. The 10th meeting of the Shilluk Council (1931) records: 'Chiefs are warned that the following customary "punishments" for a woman are forbidden and will be followed by imprisonment:
(1) Tying her up in a net and half drowning her.
(2) Tying her up outside at night for the mosquitos to bite her.
(3) Smoking her in a closed up house.
(4) Sticking thorns up her finger nails.
The Government does not object to the lawful guardian of a woman or a girl giving her reasonable correction with the palm of his hand, or a light whip, but beating with a stick is also forbidden.

8:Howell E-4,5 (1937, 1948) 1953 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

69 Amajok married Nyagidding for ten head of cattle and ten sheep. Nyagidding gave birth
586 to two children who died as adults, while she herself died some twenty-eight years ago. No cattle were returned to Amajok on her death and no claim was made so long as *X* and *Y* were living. Amajok now claims *kai ot* from Othow. This claim was upheld by the Court and two head of cattle awarded to Amajok. It is, as a matter of fact, unlikely that Amajok would have claimed *kai ot* if his daughter *Y* had lived and married, though she might have done so.

Anger wad Nyang *v.* Kanker *wad* Ming

[583] Anger married Kanker's sister, Acienhgwok, for eight head of cattle and five sheep. This was in *reth* Fadiet's time (*circa* 1909). Acienhgwok died in childbirth leaving no other children. Kanker returned six cattle and all the sheep. Anger (in 1949) then claimed the return of the remaining cattle. This claim, made some forty years after the event, was regarded by the Court as a frivolous one. It was held that the two head of cattle stood as *dhol rom*, to which Kanker had undisputable right.

586 *Kai ot* therefore has various meanings, the most precise being another daughter of
587 the dead wife's house handed over by her family as a 'substitute'. The custom is not
[613] confined to the husband as an individual, but applies to his kinship group, for Shilluk say that a girl might be handed over as *kai ot* even in a later generation, if no bride-wealth had been returned in the interim. Again, if the wife died after fulfilling her procreative obligations, her family might allow the widower to marry her sister at a reduced bridewealth (eight head of cattle instead of ten). This, however, is really only an application of the general rule that *kai ot* (here meaning a payment of cattle) can be claimed by a man from his maternal uncle when his mother dies, provided she dies
[591] at a ripe old age and has borne several children. In this sense *kai ot* does not depend on the termination of the union, but is rather confirmation thereof and is not paid unless the two lineages wish to maintain the close relationship which marriage in a previous generation has secured. This claim is now nearly always upheld in the Courts
[598] and provides an example of how a payment depending on a variety of circumstances has become enforceable at law.

Further Rules Concerning Cattle Returnable on Divorce

586 Shilluk sometimes say that in the old days on divorce all the original bridewealth cattle and all their offspring were returned. There is little evidence for this statement and the rule is certainly not applied today. The wife's kinsmen are not expected to return any cattle which have died in their possession, though they may be expected to produce the hides as evidence of death. On the other hand, cattle which have been sold for cash, slaughtered for meat, or paid in execution of debts (other than direct marriage) or as compensation for wrongs committed, must be replaced by substitutes.

Writing on this subject in 1935, Pumphrey says:

583 Cattle paid as marriage payments in Shilluk country are an exact substitute for cash in that
586 they are treated as negotiable instruments. A claim for the identical cows when, owing to divorce or death, the marriage payment is reclaimed, is never supported. Cattle paid are in fact usually negotiated immediately, just as cash. The recipient will almost invariably pay the cattle away either in satisfaction of his debts or else in the marriage of one of his near male relatives.[1]

[1] Pumphrey: from unpublished records.

8:Howell E-4,5 (1937, 1948) 1953 F223 Shilluk F223

same woman and to do so would result in spiritual calamity and sexual sickness (*dwak*) for which ritual expiation would be necessary, even though an indemnity would not be claimed. This spiritual bar does not apply to half-brothers though again no compensation would be expected. Immunity from the payment of compensation for adultery extends also to paternal cousins and agnatic kinsmen further removed in the kinship structure. The extent is variable—a link four to five generations back may still give immunity—but it appears that common residence in one hamlet or one settlement is a factor of importance. Shilluk say that this theoretical relaxation of the law of adultery is less commonly accepted than in the past and that compensation is more frequently demanded. This may be due to the fact that legal machinery is now available for the settlement of such claims, though presumably public opinion in the matter is expressed in the judgements of the Courts. Moreover, the network of obligations to assist relatives in the payment of compensation of this sort was cast wider in the past. Hence, theoretically at any rate, those who would receive compensation might well be those upon whom lies the obligation to assist in its payment. The two obligations thus cancel each other out.

The following court case illustrates the procedure.

Ajak *wad* Fadiet *v.* Awow *wad* Awingjok (*kwar kwak nian ajw*)

Awow seduced Landeng, daughter of Akwe *wad* Nyaljok. Landeng was at the time betrothed to Ajak, who had paid nine head of cattle and thirty-six sheep. She had not, however, taken up residence with Ajak at the time of the offence and, since no child resulted, only one bull is claimable. The Court awarded Ajak one bull which will be handed over to Landeng's brother, since Ajak himself has no legal claim to it.

Akoc *wad* Agiu *v.* Taytung *wad* Deng (*kwar yar nian ajw*)

Taytung impregnated Nyandongkal (daughter of Bilinyang, brother of Agiu) and she produced a girl-child. She was subsequently married to Ajing Amikwei for a full bride-wealth of ten head of cattle. The baby, however, remains with her maternal uncle and is *okeju*. Her maternal uncle has full rights in the child and will receive the bride-wealth on her marriage. Neither her mother's husband nor her physical father have any rights in her at all. This case was brought before the Court merely because Taytung had not completed the compensation payment which he was ordered to do. (He had, in fact, only paid two out of the three.)

Onak *wad* Maykong *v.* Dogreg *wad* Ajwin (*kwar yar cie dhom*)

Dogreg seduced Onak's sister Agwer. She was at the time betrothed to one Bul Ayuil, but was living at home. A boy was born to Agwer after she had taken up residence with Bul, by then her legal husband. For this reason, the child (though actually dead) is considered to belong to Bul, though the compensation is claimed by Onak. The case was brought to the Court simply because Dogreg had paid no compensation which he had previously been ordered to pay by instalments. No dispute over legal paternity of the child or over the compensation cattle had arisen. Had the child lived (especially if it had been a girl-child) Onak might have claimed legal rights in it, though the ruling here, as we have seen, is that providing the child was actually born after the woman had taken up residence with her husband it should belong to him. In fact, the child was born a considerable time after Agwer had taken up residence with Bul. Otherwise the case might have been classed as *kwar yar nian ajw* and assessed at only three head of cattle.

18: Howell E-5 (1937) 1941 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

Amayiw's nephews founded a hamlet across the water-course but is now dead and left no sons. In this example the offshoot has come to nothing. *Pa Ding* also, from which sprang *Pa Rem* and *Pa Buth* and which is of long standing, is now disintegrating. Its occupants have not been prolific and there have been too many offshoots for it to remain undiminished. It is now occupied by one man only. *Ogwak* on the other hand is flourishing and has two well-established offshoots. Thus hamlets are founded and in some cases prosper and the inhabitants increase in number. The founder is often joined by a brother or collateral relative and later the occupants may not be the direct descendants of the founder[4]. In other instances these long-established disintegrate and are sometimes abandoned altogether. The settlement is never a static formation but a dynamic and changing association of lineages, who split up among themselves within the boundaries or send out offshoots to settle in other parts of the country. Latterly, however, there has been a tendency towards stabilisation. In the past, the settlement was only a loose alliance of local branches of the clan, similar in construction and significance to the larger divisions of the tribe. However, the limited size of the area and constant contact have produced an integral unit of the social body bound by something more than a vague tradition of military co-operation. The inhabitants of a settlement live in close proximity, have legal and economic interests in common and look to their chief to represent their collective grievances in the affairs of the tribe. A mutual protection pact is, however, the basis on which they are grouped together and in this connection it is necessary to give some account of the age-sets into which they are organised.

4. In *Dhak Alal* it is interesting to note that in at least three cases hamlets have been founded by the husbands of female members of the lineage. Thus *Pa Mon Colio* was started by the husband of the daughter of *Adultung*. The daughter of *Kubuni* married into some other clan and left the territory, but her son returned to found *Pa Lual*. The daughter of *Gither* married a man from *Ayigo* and together they settled in *Dhak Alal* and their hamlet is considered an extension of *Pa Gither*. In a few cases the Shilluk settle matrilocally as in the case of *Adultung's* grandson. Often the descendants of a man who has settled in his wife's home seem to trace descent matrilineally, and will often mention the name of their mother's father, if asked their lineage, rather than a forbear in the paternal line. This is a legal fiction of convenient usage and is not technically recognised. The test of exogamy does not apply for a man would not seek to marry into his mother's lineage, but it is a claim which provides protection and added prestige to the individual who lives in close proximity to his mother's kinsmen.

11: Howell E-5 (1937) 1941 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

leave the dancing ground. Within a few minutes the village is clear of all guests, those who are unable to stand being swept along in the rush.

Before dancing for the first time the initiate is usually presented with two spears by his father. The sons of rich men are presented with a bull (*Wálè Owono*) as well.[8] This bull is treated with great care and affection by the young warrior and he is given a new name by his age-mates—taken from the colour of the bull and they alone may call him so. Theoretically the bull is kept throughout his life, a new one of similar colour and markings being substituted when it dies. It is never given as bride-wealth. The initiates then visit their relatives in the settlement and after a short period of travel return home. In the past these visits were probably on a wider scale and according to Hofmayer "after the dance it is the custom for the Shilluk initiates to lead a nomadic life for a time, traversing the country from one end to the other." This statement is probably an exaggeration, but a period of wandering visits is common among African peoples before final reintegration into the community in adult status.

At the *Cong Bul*, initiates are introduced to their new privileges together, but the rest of the warriors are not drawn up in age-sets. At the "*Kwogo*" and "*Yok*," which are funeral ceremonies, the male Shilluk are organized according to their respective age-sets. There are few other occasions when the age-set system functions at all.

Among the Shilluk the more arduous processes of cultivation are carried out communally. A man will invite his neighbours and relatives to help him in his fields and will provide merissa for them afterwards. The helpers are not necessarily his age-mates and it does not appear

8. The Shilluk say that the custom is dying out and that few fathers have bulls to spare. In any case the youth will take the name of one of his father's bulls. The *Wálè Owono* is a source of great pride to its owner and songs are composed about it which are sung for the benefit of girls.

An approximate translation of the song of Ajak, an inhabitant of the Zeraf mouth is as follows:

"I have a grey bull, a great bull,
I am going to Golbaigs to buy a bell,
A bell for the bull that lives in
My fathers byre."

19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944) 1946
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643 this emotional tension and political excitement have been in the past.

[781] 5. Although many of the Shilluk treated the ceremonies light-heartedly and on occasions with much laughter, deep in their hearts was a profound respect for their own religious beliefs and a feeling of awe at the presence of Nyikang.

[778] 6. Despite the stormy path of recent Shilluk history in which *reths* were assassinated, hanged and exiled by an alien government, and despite the disintegrating influences of civilisation, the continuity of tradition and the pious attempt to follow it was remarkable.[7]

182 643 648 7. The songs and ceremonies were characterised by a marked anti-Dervish attitude which dates back to the persecution of the Shilluk and their rulers by the followers of the Mahdi. The facts show that these attacks increased rather than weakened the unity of the tribe and indeed, strengthened the institution of the *reth* as the symbol of tribal cohesion in the face of opposition.

It is sometimes difficult to translate Shilluk terms accurately and concisely into English. Original Shilluk terminology is therefore used extensively in the text. The following Shilluk terms are consistently employed:—

Reth: The "king" of the Shilluk.

Nyireth: A son (or daughter) of a *reth*.

Kwa: Literally "descendants of", refers to a clan and precedes the name of the clan. Thus *Kwa Okelo* "the descendants of Okelo", *Kwa Reth* "the descendants of the *Reth*."

Nyikang and Dak: Tribal heroes of the Shilluk. The first king of the Shilluk and his son.

7. Cf. P. Munro. "Installation of the Reth of the Choi." *S.N.R.* Vol. 1. pp. 143 ff. (and reproduced in full in C. G. Seligman. *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*. Appendix I.)

19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944) 1946
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Fadiet died in 1917, and once more the Shilluk were divided between Fafiti Yor and Coti the son of the Turkish puppet Ajang, with the south supporting the latter; the government, had to intervene and instal and protect Fafiti by force. 195 643

From this short account it can readily be seen that the customary procedure of the *reth's* election had not taken place undisturbed for nearly one hundred years and perhaps much longer.

The effect of this stormy history in 1943 made it very difficult for the elders to remember what the procedure was in all the details. There was a constant urge to get back to the old tradition, but often quite important items were omitted or forgotten, and had to be done at the last minute in a hurry. Not even Shilluk custom stands still; it varies with the capacities of people's memories and also it is affected by outside influences. It is not a hard and fast pattern into which everything must fit. The Shilluk would like it to be, but are not always equal to the task. Certain aspects of the traditional ceremonies cannot now take place; it is no longer practicable to keep up the traditions of Dak, the son of Nyikang and great Shilluk conqueror. For example in days gone by, two subsections of the Shilluk, Akwabai near Fashoda and Abuor near Kaka, used to raid north to get the various things required in the ceremonies for the installation of the *reth*. There is now a tendency to buy these things in Kosti market. 178 643

The events which we describe fall in to four main periods:— 643

1. The death and burial of *reth* Fafiti Yor and the funeral dances held for him.
2. The election of Anei Kur.
3. The formal installation of *reth* Anei in Fashoda.[9]
4. Subsequent events which have occurred after his installation, which were motivated by a desire to confirm the *reth*, and which throw light on the nature and function of the Shilluk monarchy.

9. During the ceremonies of installation we were ably assisted by other observers, notably Mr. John Longe and the Rev. D. McClure.

19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1946) 1946
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

173 63 the traditional Shilluk polity, the two nearest to Fashoda were the greatest in the land in all constitutional and ceremonial matters, and in the prestige deriving from their office. These two were the chief of Kwom, the section immediately south of Fashoda, and the chief of Golbainy a section five miles to the north.

Nyikang divided the country into two halves separated by the Khor Arepjur just south of Fashoda. All the country to the south was called Gol Nyikang, and all to the north, Gol Dhiang. The chief of Kwom was in theoretical charge of the counties of Gol Nyikang, and the chief of Golbainy of those of Gol Dhiang. How far the writ of these two viceroys ran in executive matters within their provinces is not clear. Judicially they almost certainly had no say, and in executing commands of the *reth* they may have acted as messengers of the *reth*, but can scarcely have had authority of their own. In all matters concerning the election of the *reth* the deference shown them was a feature of the various meetings.

178 63 Details of these various officers are given in Appendix 1. Of the eleven Cclo chiefs, a number are still in fact the chiefs of government "divisions," which correspond in most cases with Nyikang's divisions, but others, whose lineage and following have shrunk, no longer have the support to press their claim to what is still regarded by all Shilluk as their office as of right. Though tradition counts for much and ancestry as well, these sanctions alone will not support the legitimate claim of a chief unless he has an imposing number of warriors prepared to back him. The present chief of Golbainy, for instance, has impeccable ancestry and traditional backing, but his [614] lineage is now small in numbers and his position as chief much weakened on that account and by agitation from other stronger lineages to be granted the chieftainship. Another interesting example of this tendency is that in recent years Kwareth lineages which are generally strong, are pressing to be given the chance to fill these chieftainships from their numbers, against all traditional usage. The traditional great chiefs who are now "impoverished" are always called in on ceremonial occasions, but have been superseded by government of the Shilluk themselves for everyday matters of administration.

24: Howell E-5 (1951-1952) 1953 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

forth from the shrine and marched northwards to bear the bounds of Shilluk country in Mumbo. The march on Fashoda then began. It is accepted custom among the Shilluk that Nyikang and his followers may seize cattle, sheep or goats which cross their path (most Shilluk are wise enough to keep them out of the way) or to demand them as offerings together with other smaller gifts from the occupiers of the villages through which they pass. This licensed plundering, which is often abused beyond the bounds of piety by Nyikang's retinue, is treated by the Shilluk with admirable tolerance, for they must know that such offerings go to fill the stomachs and pockets of the *kwo* Nyikwom. It is a sacred duty cheerfully accepted. At one point on the march at Mureo, however, their demands were thought to be excessive and were resisted, a demonstration which nearly ended in armed conflict and which delayed the party for a while.[a] They had left Akurwa on the 29th January and reached Adodo, south of Kodok, on the 4th February, and the next day, in accordance with custom, the *reth* fled to Debalo.

As we have seen, it is traditional for the *reth* to remain three nights in Debalo. In fact, *reth* Kur had already made it known that he did not intend to spend more than one night there, on the grounds that his father, Fadiri, had spent no more. Fadiri's haste with tradition had been dictated by the fear that he might be deprived of office or killed by a rival and the natural anxiety of the administrative authorities to get through the ceremonies as quickly as possible. In those days, the likelihood of civil war was much greater and Fadiri had been urged to cut the installation ceremonies to a minimum.[b] Precedents of this kind count heavily in subsequent customary procedure and in this and in previous installations it was noticeable that each *reth* was inclined to follow the procedure of his father, not that of his immediate successor.[c] This is at least one of the explanations of the variations in detail which are apparent when we compare the installation ceremonies of three *reths* of the Shilluk of which records exist.

Reth Kur's decision to remain only one night at Debalo had two main effects. In the first place, fewer of those who seek absolution for the sins of the flesh (notably the seduction of unmarried girls) were able to attend, though I am told that about fifty persons presented themselves to the *reth* for this

[a] It appears that the effigy of Nyikang was damaged in the affray and had to be taken back to Akurwa for repairs.

[b] Mr. Udal writes: "When I visited the *reth* on the 26th January, he announced his intention of spending three nights at Debalo. However, when on the 2nd February there was still no definite news of the whereabouts of Nyikang, he did not attempt to disguise his irritation at the dilatoriness of the *kwo* Nyikwom and said he would follow the precedent of his father and sleep only one night at Debalo. Accordingly, after news of Nyikang's arrival at Adodo on the evening of the 4th February had reached Fashoda, *reth* Kur and Fadiri set out before sunrise for Debalo and it was arranged between the messengers of the *reth* and Nyikang that the battle should take place on the morning of the 6th February." *Reth* Kur's impatience may have been genuine, but I do not think he would have attempted to alter established customs if he had not the precedent of his father before him.

[c] For example, see Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

29:Dempsey M-S (1910-1954) 1955
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or Greek merchant and purchase one imported from England.

The most important and busiest months in the Shilluk year are those of the rainy season, from June to November. When the first rains fall, the villagers go out to prepare their fields for planting. The main plantations are generally at a considerable distance from the village, sometimes as much as ten miles inland; the small patches of maize and millet around the villages, usually cultivated by the women, are for a quick crop that can be used as soon as it is ripe. After the first few showers the grass is burnt and the ashes left to be washed into the soil. When enough rain has fallen to soften the ground, planting begins. There is no preliminary back-breaking hoeing or digging; the Shilluk would regard as crazy anyone who would suggest that such a thing was necessary or would improve the land. He would say that if the rains are good and all other circumstances favourable to growth, he will get enough grain to last him for the year, whereas if fortune is adverse, all the digging in the world will not fill his store basket. What was good enough for his fathers away back to the time of Nyikang is good enough for him; why should he try to improve on the wisdom of the ancients? If this particular patch was sufficient for his father and his father's father, why should he go to the trouble of clearing another? One of the Fathers in Lul, an expert and enthusiastic farmer, tried to convert the schoolboys to a better system of farming by showing them the benefits of digging and manuring the land. He divided an area of ground into two equal parts, planting one half according to the Shilluk and the other according to his own improved method; yet even the sight of the bumper crop that he obtained failed to impress the boys: it was not the Shilluk way of doing things and therefore not for them. And so, the husbandman with a sharp pointed stick removes a small divot from the unbroken surface, drops in a few millet seeds and pushes back the soil with his heel as he moves on. When the whole field has been sown in this manner, he is content to sit back and leave the rest to the beneficence of Nyikang,

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
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The body of the dead king, wrapped in a white cloth, lies in state in his capital of Fashoda. During the course of the second night it is taken secretly to a nearby village for temporary interment, for by tradition the body is not to be buried for about a year after the death of the king, but is placed in a hut which is sealed up. Traditionally, too, the youngest of his wives should be sealed up alive with him, and the hut allowed to fall into ruins and thus form a tomb for them, but happily this dreadful custom is no longer practised.

After an interval of about a year, the remains of the dead king are removed from their temporary resting place and taken, again by night and with secrecy, to his own village where they are buried in a grave dug in the floor of a hut. This is a signal for the people from all over the country to come in for the funeral dances. The number of people who attend the dances is indicative of the popularity that the late king enjoyed among his subjects, and so too is the number of cattle sacrificed. This may run into several hundreds, some of which are contributed by the family of the deceased, but most being the tribute of chiefs and people. The meat of the slaughtered animals is distributed among those taking part in the funeral ceremonies.

Two or three days after the king has been buried, on a day appointed, the warriors armed with spears and war shields and in well-ordered companies, each headed by a flag bearer and marshalled according to the district from which they come, encircle the outside of the village, singing songs in praise of Nyikang and the late king. They then enter the village and dance round the drums and the tomb, stopping at a concerted signal to kneel in homage to the dead, facing the tomb, clashing spear on shield and addressing funeral chants to the king. Once more they encircle the village, this time on the inside, visiting each of the late king's huts in turn, some stepping out of the ranks and peering into the empty huts as though searching for the king and then retiring to give place to the next contingent. Thus the funeral ceremonies continue for two or three days, but

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
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weight in the deliberations of the electorate. Sometimes, too, when the final choice is a difficult one, it would seem that the selectors have recourse to augury and divination. A number of small stones, one for each candidate, is placed in a fierce fire. A stone that glows red indicates that, under the prince it represents, cattle will be plentiful in the country; a white-hot stone would presage an abundance of grain in the new rule; one glowing both white and red would entail an era of plenty both in cattle and grain, whilst that which merely blackens and bursts would unanimously be rejected.

When the decision is at last reached, one of the great chiefs goes unobtrusively and by night to the village where the king-elect is living. During the deliberations of the electorate all nyireths are required to remain in their own homes and not to approach the neighbourhood of Fashoda; this precaution is taken to ensure that no nyireth should rush the capital and usurp the power for himself. The chief challenges the nyireth to a mock battle and when he has thus given a token of his prowess and valour the news of his election is formally broken to him. He is brought quietly, again under cover of night, to Fashoda, and at daybreak inducted with ceremony into his capital. When these preliminaries are over and the reth-elect is settled in Fashoda, the news of his election is noised abroad, and chiefs and nyireths come in from all parts of the country to pay their respects to their new king. The situation has become somewhat easier now, since with the accomplished fact, there is little likelihood of an armed insurrection taking place. There is always of course the possibility of any nyireth asserting his right to the throne and proving it by slaying the king in single combat, and in former days it was customary for the king to slaughter as many of the nyireths as he could lay his hands on—a most effective method of reducing the potential danger to himself.

The period between the election and the solemn installation of the king is roughly a year. During this time the land is, as it were, dead, for the spirit of Nyikang still lacks its habitual abode, and is under interdict. No great public dances may be held, except the funeral dances for the late

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
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ordeal'. He brings a sheep to the village where the girl is; a corner of the animal's ear is cut off and the piece put into a bowl of water and the man, the girl and the baby are sprinkled with the resultant blood and water. If by the following morning the child is still alive the man is adjudged to have lied and must pay compensation as above. If, however, the baby should die during the night, then the girl is held to have accused the man falsely.

During the reign of King Kur, whose despotic methods of government resulted in his being removed from office, a much grimmer and more realistic trial by ordeal was enacted. The man and the girl were brought to a channel of the Nile where a large crocodile habitually dwelt. By some means this brute was called up from the depths and the pair placed equidistant from it were made to swim across the channel, or, if they could not swim, were launched on flimsy rafts. The one that the crocodile seized was deemed to be guilty of lying. It is on record that one youth about to be put to the test in this manner protested thus, 'I know that I am innocent all right, but how does the crocodile know that?'

After the proceedings of the naming and the trying of the lovers is concluded, the mother is allowed to have her child. If it should be a boy, the father, who has been informed of the birth and sex of the child though as yet he is not allowed to see him, sends a present of a miniature harpoon, presumably indicative of his desire that his son should grow up to be a mighty hunter of hippopotami. Then a small basket is woven and filled with ashes of burnt cow dung. One of the baby's maternal uncles hangs the basket round his waist calling upon Nyikang to bless the child and to make him a good husbandman. (The basket containing the ashes represents the large family basket filled with grain.) He then walks round the hut where the baby is, beats upon the wall with the basket and then throws it into the road. If the child is a girl the ashes are mixed with water and the uncle makes models of a bull and a cow. Nyikang's blessing is invoked upon the child that at her marriage she may command a good